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## A Tale of Two Churches: 'Protestant' Architecture and the Politics of Religion in Late Nineteenth-Century Rome

The two Anglican churches in Rome by the distinguished nineteenth-century English architect George Edmund Street (1821-81) are notable examples of High Victorian design (**Figs. 1 & 2**).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the American Episcopal church on Via Nazionale, St Paul's Within-the-Walls (1872-6), was described by the eminent architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock as a 'major work of the Victorian Age' (Millon, 2001: 32). Yet, despite this commendation, very little scholarly attention has been afforded either church, especially the English one, All Saints' (1880-7), on Via del Babuino. For most casual onlookers, these buildings appear as incongruous anomalies: Gothic Revival structures in red brick peering out from among a wider urban fabric that is essentially, if not oppressively, classical. The general feeling is that they somehow seem foreign and therefore out of place (Meeks, 1953: 215; Meeks, 1966: 281; Palmer, 1981: 27).

At first glance Street's churches do appear rather aloof from much of the architectural context of modern Rome, especially when considered in relation to the character of the immediate urban environments in which they are located. However, as we shall see, there were good reasons for dissociating them from the city's modern fabric in this way.

Although a small amount of scholarship exists on Street's churches in Rome, especially St Paul's (mostly on account of the magnificent Burne-Jones mosaics that grace its interior), it by and large overlooks the wider cultural and political context of the two buildings.<sup>2</sup> Some ambiguity has thus arisen as to the principal motivations behind not only the commission, siting, and design of Street's two Roman churches, but also their wider purpose. In this article I argue that in order to understand these two churches as meaningful expressions of a particular religious worldview they must be considered as a response to the political context of the Italian peninsula at the time. The religious dimension here is especially important, for as Danilo Raponi has suggested (2014: 12), Anglo-Italian relations cannot properly be understood merely at the level of high politics, but must also take account of religious sympathies basic to Victorian culture and identity.<sup>3</sup> Much the same applies to American reactions to the Risorgimento

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes acknowledge the generous support of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in making the research for this article possible through the award of the Rome Fellowship at the British School at Rome (2014). Thanks also to Jacopo Benci and Michael Hall and for commenting on earlier versions of this article, and to Fr. Jonathan Boardman and Andrea D'Agosto for access to the vestry archives of All Saints' and St Paul's respectively.

<sup>2</sup> These histories focus primarily on the formal characteristics of the buildings as works of architecture, comprising essentially a blend of historical events surrounding Street's commission with a formal analysis of the buildings themselves (Millon, 1982; Millon, 2001; Varela Braga, 2006; Elliott, 2004). In this respect they are somewhat derivative of earlier accounts, such as those by R. J. Nevin (1878), Walter Lowrie (1926), Muriel Talbot Wilson (1916), or Henry Watson Wasse (1885). The mosaics by Burne-Jones have also garnered attention, with dissertations produced by Richard Dorment (1975 & 1978) and Claire Ptaschinski (2013), as well as a handful of articles.

<sup>3</sup> The centrality of religion to Victorian political culture in general is outlined in Parry (1986).

(Marraro, 1956). In this respect Street's two churches played directly into the politico-religious tensions that characterised Italian unification.

Given these concerns, we may ask to what extent the two buildings were calculated works of resistance vis-à-vis the religious condition of Rome (and Italy)? In what ways can they be understood as beacons signalling the dawn of a new, liberal and pluralist age in Rome – a literal and metaphorical breach into the walled heart of Christendom? Despite recent controversies in the Church of England over its own tendencies towards neo-medievalism, were not these two churches manifestations of the irresistible forces of modernity that had finally caught up with an institution (Roman Catholic Church) that had shielded itself from the passing inconveniences of the outside world, bound by the belligerent righteousness of its medieval conservatism? The far-reaching significance of the conquest of Rome in 1870 is vitally important to these questions. Shorn of their context, the myth of the apparent architectural incongruity of Street's two churches is only perpetuated.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to provide some necessary perspective on these two important Victorian churches by engaging substantially with the difficult and often fluid context of Risorgimento Italy out of which they emerged, including the city of Rome immediately following its capture by Italian national forces on 20 September 1870. This will aid an interpretation of the buildings that pays due attention to their political and religious agency. As such, this article will not be a traditional formal analysis of the two buildings, nor will it consider in detail the particular views or aspirations of the architect himself. Rather, it is concerned with how architecture was understood as a mediating force in the struggle over politics and identity.

With this in mind, Street's two Roman churches are examined together, for they not only represent two intersecting episodes in the architect's lifelong love affair with Italian medieval architecture, but also the presence of Anglicanism in nineteenth-century Rome. By taking a fresh look at the extant archival documentation, alternative possibilities are offered (and revealed) as to how we might further decode the significance of these beguiling if still largely misunderstood works of architecture in context.

### **A Changing Scene: Religion and Politics in Risorgimento Italy**

The events surrounding the so-called conquest of Rome in 1870 are well known. The sudden if not entirely unexpected capture of the city by Italian national forces on 20 September bequeathed to the new Italy its long-awaited (and desired) capital. More specifically, and in direct reference to the two buildings under examination here, it changed everything for the Protestant communities residing there. Prominent among these communities were those adherents of the Church of England and the American Episcopal Church, who had been gathering in Rome in increasing numbers since the early to mid-nineteenth century. However, until the fall of Papal Rome, these

congregations were ultimately forced to conduct services outside the walls of the old city, in less than satisfactory environs, only metres from the Porta del Popolo (**Fig. 3**). Despite the fact that being 'outwith the gates' made no material difference to the legal position of non-Catholic worship within the diocese of Rome (or indeed Papal territory), for it had always been officially banned, the Anglican communities nonetheless endured this indignity for the sake of sanction, even tolerating guards being placed outside their chapels during times of worship (Townsend, 1851: 79; Nevin, 1878: 31; Wasse, 1885: 3).

Being put beyond the walls was certainly interpreted by Anglicans in Rome as a deliberate and spiteful affront to their confession, demonstrating the contempt with which they felt their religion was held by Vatican authorities (Nevin, 1878: 33).<sup>4</sup> These were no cemetery churches, and being beyond the walls carried the obvious connotation of disease and infection.<sup>5</sup> At one level the Vatican's reaction to Protestant communities in Rome revealed more about it than them, demonstrating an abiding fear over the potential threat that Protestantism presented to the tightly-controlled ideological and doctrinal system of the Papacy. It was not conversions that worried the Vatican, for they were rather unlikely, especially in numbers, but what Protestantism signified as an idea.<sup>6</sup> Like the secular and liberalising agendas of the Italian unionist movement itself, Protestantism, with its principles of freedom of conscience and individual responsibility, was seen as a heretical 'error' that, if left to infiltrate the body politic unchecked, would slowly topple the Papal edifice. After all, it was known that a sizable portion of the population in the Papal States was indifferent if not outright hostile towards the Vatican and its grip on power, as were the Italian people as a whole in seeing the Church as an impediment both to progress and national unification.<sup>7</sup> Anything that might exacerbate disaffection towards the Church, thus undermining its social and religious authority, had to be dealt with.<sup>8</sup>

However, it was the Risorgimento at large, and the continued push for Italian national unification during the course of the nineteenth century, that was most threatening to the Church of Rome and its political and territorial claims on the peninsula. Among the Church's tactics for dealing with this hazard, apart from proclaiming papal infallibility, issuing excommunications, and forbidding Roman Catholics from participating in the

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<sup>4</sup> See also: Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, circular letter 'To the Friends of the American Chapel, Rome' (1871).

<sup>5</sup> For this longstanding connotation, see chapters by Bradley, Schultz, and Gentilcore in Bradley and Stow (2012).

<sup>6</sup> The Roman Catholic Church was particularly concerned about the phenomenon of British evangelical colporteurs distributing bibles, in Italian, throughout Italy. See Raponi (2014: 73-111). As Stefano Villani has shown, there were also attempts throughout the first half of the nineteenth century to use Italian translations of the *Book of Common Prayer* as a means encouraging reform within the Roman Catholic Church. See Villani (2017).

<sup>7</sup> For instance, see (1860) Religious Freedom in Italy. *The Spectator*. 14 April: 13-14. For a summary of the resistance to and subversive tactics of the Papacy in relation to Italian unification, see Clark (1996: 81-8). For the Americans, see Dowling (2014).

<sup>8</sup> The 'error' of Protestantism was also outlined in the *Syllabus of Errors* issued by the Pope Pius IX in 1864. See Mack Smith (1968: 406-7). See also McIntire (1983: 11-12, 22-9).

processes of modern state formation, such as voting in free and open elections, was simply to deny the existence of the new Italy (Clark, 1996: 81-8; Kertzer, 2000: 181-205; McIntire, 1983: 22-9; Raponi, 2014: 154) **(Fig. 4)**. A more practical, but no less divisive, defence of the Church's position came in the form of the widely condemned manoeuvre to allow French troops to be garrisoned at Rome following the Revolution of 1848, to oust the new republican government and to prevent Italian forces from making further attempts at annexing Papal territory and thus divesting the Church of its temporal powers (Matsumoto-Best, 2003: 114-24).

The Church of course viewed the threat of being subsumed within the new Italian state as an act of 'aggression' against its divinely ordained right to exist independent of worldly concerns, as well as a denial of its entitlement to maintain its presence and authority as the centre of Christendom (as it saw it). To the new Italy, however, the States of the Church were seen as an outdated and unnecessary vestige of medieval politics, and one that was not only calculated against liberal reform but also a physical obstacle to unification of the peninsula. The Church argued, somewhat disingenuously, that its location in Italy was in some sense a mere artefact of modern history, and that it existed for Catholics the world over; that, in effect, it was (or ought to be) immune from contemporary and local political affairs (Kertzer, 2000: 188-91; McIntire, 1983: 4). The Pope, it was claimed, was subject to no man (Clark, 1996: 84). Anticlerical secularists, on the other hand, were neither impressed nor persuaded by what they saw as the Church's sophistry on the matter, and remained determined to deal once and for all with what they were wont to call 'la questione romana'. With such a fundamental difference of opinion over the fortunes of the Italian peninsula and its people at stake, and diplomatic channels all but exhausted by 1867 with the Vatican's outright rejection of the Free Church Bill (enshrining freedom of religion in law), only one side could prevail.

### **Anglicans in Rome: From Lamentation to Liberation**

How were these events interpreted by the Anglican communities in Rome? And how did it affect their attitude towards architecture? The most reliable sources we have for their views on the matter are to be found in the extant archival documentation and the publications produced by those involved immediately prior to and during the conquest of Rome in 1870. What is clear, both at the time and after the fact, is that these communities felt somewhat persecuted and certainly thwarted by Vatican authorities. According to letters and published accounts, the English and American Anglican communities in Rome, which had grown throughout the course of the nineteenth century owing to increased seasonal tourism, found it difficult (both financially and legally) to secure convenient places of worship. Although officially illegal, other forms of Christian and non-Christian worship, such as Judaism, had been tolerated in the city of Rome because the communities they attracted were financially beneficial to the Vatican. However, being unofficial, their status was never protected, and policy towards their

presence was liable to shift from time to time. Thus, services would routinely move between rooms in private dwellings (clandestine) to facilities provided for in hotels. But these arrangements were always viewed as unsatisfactory and therefore only temporary.

In the case of Church of England services, which had been held in the city from 1818, a committee was formed from among the congregation to begin advising on and collecting funds for a more permanent place of worship. Within the walls, such services were permitted in the confines of an official foreign legation or embassy. When, by 1825, no such accommodation was forthcoming, the English Church committee opted for a location outside the walls, just beyond the Porta del Popolo, in a room specially hired for the purpose. As one-time chaplain to the English Church in Rome, Henry Watson Wasse, put it: 'The Papal authorities approved of this step, and no further trouble was given to the congregation' (Wasse, 1885: 3).<sup>9</sup> But, again, although adequate, this solution also proved inconvenient on account of the fact that the room was in a less than respectable part of the city, surrounded by animal sties and other nuisances. In time, this room also proved too small and the rent too high. Eventually, in 1857, after a few further attempts to locate alternative accommodation were aborted, including plans for the erection of a simple church (a prospect that was never likely to be allowed in Papal territory), another building with a room large enough to seat 700 people was obtained nearby. At this point the eminent English architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-78) was approached to refurbish and decorate the room as 'a place set apart for the worship of God, according to the rites and ceremonies of the English Church' (Wasse, 1885: 5). This proved too expensive, and likewise fell through. Sometime later, in 1865, another noted ecclesiastical architect, William Slater, was engaged to prepare plans for the decoration of the chancel (Wasse, 1885: 5), including a marble reredos, which still exists to this day, located in the passage between the porch and nave of the current English church on Via del Babuino. These events take us up to the decision to erect a purpose-built place of worship within the old city following the events of 1870.

A similar fate befell the American Episcopalian community in its attempts to establish a permanent place of worship in Rome. Known initially as Grace Church, it too was forced to endure the indignity of being located outside the old city walls, 'with the swine', in rooms adjacent the English chapel. Its early life had likewise been peripatetic, moving between, at first, the American Legation in the Palazzo Bernini from 1859, then to the Palazzo Simonetti, and then on to the Palazzo Lozzano, as the Legation moved premises. Services were suspended for part of the American Civil War, but resumed in 1863, at first in a bank, and then under the protection of the new foreign minister at the Hotel de Russie, before ending up in the houses of certain members of the congregation. In 1864 it found a new home in the Palazzo Doria, within the premises of the new American Legation. At this point, however, it was decided by the vestry of the church to sever ties

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<sup>9</sup> Although, he added sardonically, 'On the contrary, gendarmes were placed at the door of the building for the purpose, it was said, of affording protection to the worshippers'.

with the Legation and go it alone. Of course, as might have been expected, the church, no longer protected by the American Legation, was sent outside the walls (Nevin, 1878: 9-34). Although this concession was granted to both the English and American communities by the Vatican, services were still to be conducted 'incognito'.

In reading the sources that relay the early histories of these communities, it is easy to sense a degree of opprobrium, especially in the case of the Americans. Indeed, the Rev. R. J. Nevin, who was incumbent of Grace Church at the time of the building of St Paul's, made no attempt at disguising his antipathy towards the Vatican, nor to temper his disgust at the way in which he felt American Episcopalians had been treated by the authorities in Rome prior to 1870. The English were slightly more diplomatic, if no less dismayed by the situation. This antipathy towards Papal Rome is in itself neither unique nor surprising. As William Vance has shown, Rome in the imagination of Protestant Americans was a place fraught with moral hazard. Naturally of great interest to enthusiasts of art and biblical history, it nevertheless remained the centre of a once supreme if now enervated authoritarian Papacy. As such, it repulsed as much as it lured (Vance, 1985 & 1989). There was of course a general, underlying prejudice towards the Catholic Church, and in particular the Vatican, among Americans owing to the Protestant foundations of American culture. Despite support in some quarters of American society for the Pope's cause, this animus reached a peak in 1867, politically speaking, when Congress officially withdrew the American Legation to Rome in protest over the ejection of the Protestant Episcopal church beyond the walls (Marraro, 1956: 58-9). More fundamentally, believing as they did in the progressive modernity and ethical superiority of their own society, many Americans naturally found Rome a challenge to their assumptions about history and the future (Vance, 1985: 518). It appeared to be a place that time had forgotten, and one where the march of progress and the ultimate liberation of mankind had ceased.

English reactions to Rome and what it represented were broadly similar (Pemble, 1987: 210-27; Martens, 2010; Sweet, 2012: 129-47; Janes, 2012). St Peter's – that great fane of Roman Catholic corruption and hierarchy (as many saw it) – was more often than not denounced by Victorian travellers. Terms frequently employed (in a derogatory sense) included 'theatre', 'illusion', 'spectacle', and 'opera'. For instance, Elizabeth Eastlake considered the building akin to 'a clubhouse, with balconies and entresols and every kind of mixed ornament which the worst upholstery and taste could invent', while it reminded Fanny Kemble, the famous English actress, 'of nothing so much as the operatical representations of the tomb of Ninus in the *Semiramide*' (Pemble, 1987: 201-2, 214). Unsurprisingly, the young John Ruskin was 'disgusted' by it, further observing that the city as a whole had 'a strange horror' lying over it (Hilton, 2002: 58). Charles Dickens, too, was less than enthusiastic about his encounters in Rome.<sup>10</sup> Political heavyweights were likewise appalled by what they encountered on their journeys. W. E.

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<sup>10</sup> In his *Pictures from Italy* (1844), Charles Dickens, while impressed by St Peter's, was neither moved nor 'affected' by it, 'infinitely' preferring English cathedrals instead. For Dickens, see Janes (2009).

Gladstone, for one, developed his distaste for papal influence as a result of what he witnessed during his visits to Rome in the early 1830s and late 1840s, which later acted to harden his stance against the divisiveness of Ultramontanism (Schreuder, 1970: 476; McIntire, 1983: 32-3).<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, owing to such widely-held views in Britain on the Papacy (and Rome as its centre of authority), successive British governments between 1846 and 1874, in particular Liberal coalition governments, developed an increasingly intolerant position towards what they perceived as the tyranny and backwardness of Papal rule, evidenced no more clearly than in the 'oppressive' social conditions of the Papal States, and in Rome itself, which was often described as 'filthy' and hopelessly 'corrupt' by those who experienced it.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the civic alarm caused by Pius IX's unilateral extension of the Roman Catholic hierarchy into England in 1850, perceived by many as an 'aggressive' and insolent manifestation of Ultramontanism, raised the hackles of Parliament even further, underlining (if it was needed) official British support for the speedy unification of the peninsula under the constitutional fiat of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel II (not Mazzini, who was considered too radical), including the ultimate eradication of the Papacy's temporal power altogether (Parry, 1986: 43; Matsumoto-Best, 2003: 111-36).

Moreover, given Anglicanism's own difficulties with the Anglo-Catholic movement and 'perversion', it had become increasingly important for High Anglican officiates in Rome to emphasise the distinct and thus 'protestant' basis of their branch of the Church Catholic. This we find Nevin doing over and over, employing the term Protestant when and wherever he thought it would strike the right contrast, despite his High Church leanings. To be sure, his own branch of the Anglican communion was officially labelled 'Protestant', but he more often than not employed the term in its plain rather than nakedly sectarian sense, seeing both himself and his church – as part of the wider reform movement in Latin or Catholic Christianity – as maintaining a state of *protest* in the face of the Vatican. He obviously thought that anything that dissented from the grotesquely deformed and repressive ordinances of the Papacy was 'protestant' in its very being. With the beguiling and 'idolatrous' imagery of the Counter-Reformation Church bearing down on all sides, Protestant sentiments in such a place were naturally piqued. In this respect, whatever their intrinsic differences may have been, reformed Christian congregations in Rome were able to rally around what they perceived as a common enemy in the Vatican.

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<sup>11</sup> Gladstone did not have quite the same reaction to St Peter's as Ruskin, but did recognise the dire consequences of papal government, as he saw them, in both Rome and the surrounding lands of the Papal States. See Foot (1968: 460-62).

<sup>12</sup> General British government attitudes toward the Risorgimento, which were all but universally supportive, can be found in McIntire (1983) and Parry (1986: 16, 43). For the United States, see Marraro (1956: 58-9).



## The American Episcopalians: R. J. Nevin and St Paul's Within-the-Walls

Inherent Protestant animus towards the Papacy is critical to understanding the sequence and nature of subsequent actions undertaken by both the English and American communities in Rome following the demise of Papal sovereignty. Indeed, before the dust had barely settled, both communities began looking for new sites within the walls of the old city. The Americans were the first to act decisively.

The driving force behind what would become St Paul's Episcopal church in Rome was the Rev. Robert Jenkins Nevin (1839-1906) (**Fig. 5**).<sup>13</sup> Born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1839, Nevin was the son of the noted Presbyterian and then German Reformed minister and theologian, John Williamson Nevin (1803-86). Shortly after graduating from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa., an educational establishment with close ties to German Reformed Christianity, Nevin fought in the American Civil War with the Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, eventually commanding its Independent Battery. At the conclusion of the War he entered the General Theological Seminary, New York City, graduating in 1867.<sup>14</sup> It was here that Nevin gained his Anglican qualifications, first becoming rector of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, Pa., before receiving the incumbency of Grace Church at Rome in 1869.<sup>15</sup> Nevin's family background, along with his early schooling, go some way in explaining his strong antipathy towards the Roman Catholic Church. Although he had drifted towards High Anglicanism by the late 1860s, no doubt owing in part to the Mercersburg influence in his father's theological outlook,<sup>16</sup> Nevin never seems to have lost this stout animus towards the papacy and its exclusive claims to the Petrine bishopric.<sup>17</sup> It was, as Judith Rice Millon has observed, Nevin's ambition to 'bring St Paul ... back to his true position beside St Peter as joint protector and founder of Christ's Church' (Millon, 2001: 18).

At the time the American's moved to acquire their new site, however, the situation was still somewhat fluid, with only a provisional government in place. A free vote in Rome had resulted overwhelmingly in favour of annexation to the new Italian state, but the formal steps of admission were not yet complete. Nevertheless, as Nevin explained, 'the whole people felt themselves to be already a part of Italy, and free to act under the Italian Constitution and laws' (Nevin, 1878: 35).

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<sup>13</sup> It had been voted and resolved in a meeting of the vestry at Grace Church in April 1871 that Nevin be allowed to visit America with 'full powers to engage an architect and do anything he may see fit to further the object'. See: Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, Vestry Meeting Minutes (1 April 1871).

<sup>14</sup> Obituary. *New York Times* 21 September 1906.

<sup>15</sup> Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, Vestry Meeting Minutes (1869). Nevin was elected at the Annual Congregational Meeting in early December 1869.

<sup>16</sup> This is the suggestion of D. G. Hart, based on contemporary criticisms of Nevin's theology by John Bomberger. See Hart (2005: 222-3). Indeed, by the time Nevin graduated from the General Theological Seminary, it had not only been under the influence of Tractarianism for some time, but was in the grip of Ritualism. These happenings had clearly rubbed off on Nevin, despite his unequivocal stance on the error of Rome (Dawley, 1969: 145-244).

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, so strong was Nevin's antipathy towards the Church of Rome that his counterpart at the English church, the Rev. H. W. Wasse, described his 'denouncements of Popery' as 'rabid'. See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, H. W. Wasse to E. P. Sketchley, unpublished letter (7 Nov. 1887), C/EUR/21a.

This observation is crucial. The Italian constitution as it then existed was essentially that of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, which had steadily developed under the leadership of the great modernising statesman Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour (1810-61). Significantly, this constitution – in its original form, the so-called *Statuto fondamentale* (1848) – prescribed equality before the law, including freedom of religion as a cornerstone of modern, liberal government, and so remained a cornerstone of the wider Italian constitution after the declaration of the new Kingdom of Italy in 1861 (Jemolo, 1960: 16-26). Part of this reform, as it had initially taken shape in Sardinia, saw the repeal of disqualifications against Protestants (in this case the Waldensians) and other religious minorities, but would lead ultimately to a more general campaign to extend civil liberties and demolish the ‘confessional state’ (i.e., nominal Roman Catholic supremacy) throughout the whole of Italy (Beales and Biagini, 2002: 93-4).<sup>18</sup> It was under the fiat of these principles, and the apparent civil liberties they guaranteed, that the English and American communities in Rome felt free to acquire property and begin erecting Anglian churches worthy of the name, even within the see of another, pre-existing bishopric. For his part, Nevin was convinced of the righteousness of this action:

I have not the least feeling of doubtfulness upon this question of intrusion ... I hold that the Bishop of Rome has fallen into such fatal heresy, has been so manifestly false to the Apostolic trust committed to him, as to have wholly forfeited those ecclesiastical rights to which would otherwise have attached to his See; and that it is the right of the Bishops of any neighboring Church to send truly Catholic teachers into that See, or even to reestablish the Catholic Episcopate there in its purity and integrity (Nevin, 1878: 33-4).

Less than two weeks after the fall of Papal Rome, the vestry of what was then still Grace Church met to deliberate over necessary action. Following this meeting a circular letter was published to raise funds for the erection of a new building. The language in this document was unequivocal, and the strategy laid bare. The promotion of religious liberty was obviously one goal, but the potential moral effect of architecture was also high on the agenda. In soliciting donations, the committee noted how a new building would be expedient to the extent that it would not only stand as a symbol of religious freedom in the new Italy but also bear witness to the continuing efforts to rid Christianity in Rome of ‘Papal corruptions’ through genuine reform. This appeal appeared to take the necessity for a new building beyond any kind of special pleading, for it may well have been just as expedient (financially) to acquire and refurbish an existing structure. Only a new building with a *new* architecture, it was claimed, could hope to achieve the aims of reformed Christianity in Rome.<sup>19</sup> This is an important idea. As the published circular insisted: ‘to a people like the Italians – all eye and ear – the very stones, the spire and chimes, of a distinctive Church building, will teach more of the

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<sup>18</sup> For Anglican attempts at co-opting Waldensians for wider Catholic reform, see Villani (2017).

<sup>19</sup> It was also observed in this regard that: ‘Moreover, for us to occupy a Roman Church would excite much ill-feeling against us among the superstitious people, and greatly impair our influence with the liberal Catholics’. See: Rome, St. Paul’s Vestry Archive, circular letter ‘To the Friends of the American Chapel, Rome’ (1871).

strength and reality of our Christianity, than any account of writings that might be distributed among them; and, will be, as well, a constant, visible witness to them that religious liberty, and the rights of the human conscience, have at last found a home in the city of the Popes and the Caesars'.<sup>20</sup> The effect of such a structure in this locale was supposed to be all the more advantageous, for 'Rome must always be the controlling moral capital of Italy'.<sup>21</sup>

There are two words that stand out here: 'distinctive' and 'reality'. Both of these would be crucial in guiding the choice of architect and style of building, as well as how the building was intended to be perceived. Indeed, 'reality' – here taken to mean a certain essence relating to veracity and authenticity – was a key concern of the architect Street's own approach to building design, thus corresponding precisely with wider notions of 'truth' and rationality in Protestant theology. In the mind of Nevin and his associates there was a necessary connection between a building in a 'distinctively Gothic style' and the need for it to be a 'type and representative of our pure branch of the one holy and Apostolic Church'.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, in embodying these attributes, the Gothic style would also make for a building that stood out as a 'memorial and exponent of that freedom of conscience and religious liberty, which is the priceless privilege guaranteed to us by our American institutions'. The noteworthiness of this last claim is its invocation of national and political, as opposed to purely religious, attributes. The argument essentially stated that not only should the liberties enjoyed by Americans in the United States be in some sense extended to Italy – what, in effect, amounted to a case for extraterritoriality – but also that the new church be appreciated as an implement of 'soft power' in the Episcopalian's endeavour to reform the Roman Church (perhaps even overthrow it) at the heart of its operations. Thus, location and proximity were key. As Nevin would later observe:

From the beginning we recognised, at Rome, its [the project's] magnitude and its responsibility. The building we were to do involved much more than the convenience and honour of our particular congregation. It represented the Church at large, both to Roman Catholic and to Protestant Europe, as a body, on the one hand, reformed from the pagan corruptions of the Papacy; on the other, freed from all state establishment, and political control in things spiritual (Nevin, 1878: 37).

In other words, St Paul's would be the exact antithesis of the previous state of affairs in Rome, where Protestant places of worship were 'prohibited from showing any external sign' of their presence or character.

Direct evidence of the purpose that Nevin had in mind for St Paul's, and thus its transformative potential, exists in a revealing anecdote concerning the erection of the building. Here it was pointedly observed that the basis of 'reality' in Street's design was

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> These are the words of the Rev. William Bacon Stevens, bishop of Philadelphia, who was in charge of Episcopalian churches on the continent of Europe at the time. See Nevin, *St Paul's Within the Walls*, p. 45.

not merely misunderstood by the Roman builders contracted to erect the structure, but complete anathema to their mentality and way of working:

The total ignorance of the Roman mechanics of Gothic building, or of English methods of work, required of me a constant personal supervision of the works... [T]he greatest watchfulness was required to maintain the solidity and reality that we wished to insist upon throughout the work. The modern Roman scarcely understands the idea. As builders, they had done no new work of any account for a long time before the new Government came in. ... [T]he sense of real construction, in stone at least, has almost been lost. But, worse than this, they have not only lost the care for reality in construction—they have actually acquired a morbid love for imitation, or rather for making something seem to be something different from what it is. This has the merit, in their eyes, of being a work of art, and of standing, in this way, in a higher rank than simply real work. Any workman, the idea was, could do real work; but to cover a stone-wall with cement, and imitate brickwork upon it, or turn a brick-wall, by the same means, into an apparent stone-wall, this required an *artist* ... Before it was finished, however, the workmen had, I think, thoroughly acquired the sense of reality as an essential element in good architecture ... (Nevin, 1878: 77-8).<sup>23</sup>

This account is illuminating in at least three respects. First, it appears to confirm that the art of building in Rome – at far as Gothic revivalists were concerned – had sunk to an exceedingly low, entirely false, and thus unambiguously immoral ebb: that architecture as a living and dignified art form was all but dead in that city. Secondly, that this state of affairs might be extrapolated as evidence of the generally depressed moral condition of Rome (as a polity), together with that of the Roman Catholic faith. And, thirdly, that the missionary agenda that Nevin believed he was bringing with the new building and its architecture had made its first ‘conversions’ through the moral and ultimately spiritual lessons imparted through the careful practice of ‘real’ architecture.

Given his pronounced animus towards the Roman Catholic Church, it seems likely that Nevin’s intention in relaying this episode was to present it as a kind of modern parable – that even basic material practices such as building construction were not only indicative of much deeper and more serious cultural defects, but that they were also capable of rectifying moral and spiritual failings by way of demonstration. Despite their ‘cunning’, the Roman workmen are here characterised by Nevin in an allegorical sense as essentially innocent, if not gormless, members of both Roman and wider Italian society, trapped in a kind of intellectual slavery (as Ruskin might have described it) by their unwitting propagation of procedures that thoroughly embodied the illiberal and depraved lineaments of a totally corrupt social and religious system (**Fig. 6**). Here was proof,

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<sup>23</sup> This ‘disposition’ to which Nevin correlates with views held by many Protestant missionaries in Italy at the time, that the Italian ‘mentality’ was endemically flawed by long exposure to Roman Catholic mores. See Raponi (2013).

Nevin no doubt believed, of the morally transformative effects that such a 'pure and beautiful' building could have – a piece of Protestant architecture doing its silent work, parting the waves in what had once been a sea of venality and vice; opening the way to a new, rational, and spiritually 'true' existence.<sup>24</sup>

In this light, the Gothic style, in relation to the fundamentally classical landscape of Catholic Rome, was understood as both a form and mechanism of resistance. This of course connects it to the wider Gothic Revival movement, especially in Britain. It refers not only to the arguments of A. W. N. Pugin that classicism was fundamentally dishonest and corrupt,<sup>25</sup> but also to the Ruskinian notion that architecture had moral agency and ought to be a site of action in the world. To be sure, not all Protestants rejected classicism as an appropriate style for church building. Evangelicals had long viewed classical architecture as 'rational' compared to what they saw as the 'superstitious' and 'Popish' forms of the Gothic, even if attitudes had begun to soften by the 1850s. Nonconformists especially were suspicious of Gothic architecture, often preferring classical or Romanesque instead. Indeed, as the building of St Paul's pro-cathedral in Valletta clearly demonstrates (1839-44) in the Mediterranean context, even high church Anglicans preferred classicism up until about the middle of the 1840s (Dixon, 2018). Therefore, although one cannot say that 'Protestant' is in any way an unproblematic synecdoche for 'Gothic', in this particular time, with this patron and this architect, it was inevitable that an antagonism of the kind described here would emerge. For Nevin and Street, the Gothic Revival was not only progressive but 'modern', making it both an appropriate and current symbol of reform.

Cleverly, and in full cognisance of these 'true principles' in modern architectural design, Street deliberately chose an Italian variant of Gothic architecture, in consideration of its suitability to both the cultural and historical context of the commission. Although Lombardic (rather than Roman), this tactic was nevertheless meant to lend the building a further and higher degree of 'reality', thus bolstering its claims to moral edification. The Lombardic tradition also connected the building and its architecture directly to original sources in Northern Europe, where, according to Ruskin and his followers (of which Street was one), the ultimate moral foundations of good architecture were located.<sup>26</sup> It was as if to suggest to the Italians that, when it came to reviving an architecture of integrity and worth in the new Italy (a political project associated with modernity and reform), there was a perfectly appropriate local tradition to draw upon. Again, all this was intended to strike a vivid contrast with the surrounding urban environment. As Vance has shown, for Americans it was the Baroque excesses of Bernini

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<sup>24</sup> In his account Nevin was also quick to point out how favourably the liberal press in Rome (and Italy at large) reported the opening of St Paul's, especially the Roman daily *Libertà*. It was observed in this paper that, 'the Episcopal church, with its naked walls, and its crowd of reverent worshippers, will diffuse – possibly without knowing it, but none the less efficaciously – a desire, and perhaps a need, for some important change in the ancient and respected Catholic religion'. See Nevin (1878: 94-5).

<sup>25</sup> Ironically, this is something that Pugin (a Roman Catholic convert) came to realise himself while in Rome in 1847, where he noted that 'the modern churches here are frightful'. See Wainwright (1994: 8).

<sup>26</sup> See 'The Nature of Gothic' in Ruskin (1853).

and Borromini that were considered the most 'vile' and debased manifestations of modern Rome architecture. In their licentiousness and apparent corruption of form, the works of these key Roman artists were understood to reflect the venality of the Papacy itself. Indeed, for many, Baroque Rome of the Counter Reformation was simply obliterated from the tourist's mind and his/her itinerary, and if encountered was to be ritually repudiated (Vance, 1985: 501-32).

The focus on St Paul for the American Episcopal congregation at Rome, and for Nevin in particular, is significant, both as political gesture and theological crutch. Not only was the house of Pudens (now Sta. Pudenziana), where it was believed St Paul had preached, located nearby to the site for the new church, but it was in the writings of St Paul, insisted Nevin, that 'we do find most clearly set forth the great principles of faith, and liberty, and a pure conscience, for which our Church is protestant at Rome'. Moreover, 'by a singularly significant omission', he continued, 'there is no Roman church dedicated to St Paul within the city walls. There is no use trying to conceal it, St Paul has not been for many, many centuries, in much favor at the Vatican. ... I think it was Père Hyacinthe who remarked on the strangeness of this, that St Paul should only after eighteen centuries have found his way back into Rome *via America*' (Nevin, 1878: 53-4).

The appropriateness of St Paul as an emblem for the Protestant Episcopal cause in Rome was thus multidimensional, and, as such, an easy sell to the vestry committee as an alternative name to Grace Church.<sup>27</sup> These desirable associations with St Paul were both confirmed and strongly reiterated during the ceremony for the laying of the new church's foundation stone on 25 January 1873, the anniversary of the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul. In his keynote address, the Lord Bishop of Derry (Rev. William Alexander) sought to focus on the fundamental distinctions between Protestant and Roman Catholic religious observance by pointing out the well-worn trope of 'Anglo-Saxon Christianity's' reverence for scripture. Wishing to strike a vivid contrast in the context of Rome, he further stressed that for the English-speaking men and woman of the Anglican faith the bible was popular. That the Epistles of St Paul took up so much of the bible was considered evidence of St Paul's special relationship to the English-speaking, scripture-reading congregations of Rome. While the sculpture of St Paul by Canova in the crypt of St Peter's might appear to venerate the great apostle's memory, the bishop observed, only the reading and communication of his writings (i.e., the word) could truly respect his legacy.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, although the bishop added that the raising of St Paul's would be in no bitter, offensive, or sectarian spirit, it would nonetheless be a 'badge' of liberty and symbol of toleration (Nevin, 1878: 68-72). In support of these

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<sup>27</sup> Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, Vestry Meeting Minutes (15 January 1872). It was also observed by Nevin that the word 'grace' was hopelessly associated with the Madonna in the Italian mind, and that the church's original name would have been translated as 'Madonna delle Grazie' (Nevin, 1878: 53).

<sup>28</sup> It seems that both Nevin and Alexander were either unable or unwilling to doubt the provenance of St Paul's epistles in the bible, which had been under sustained criticism in biblical scholarship since the 1840s, especially through the scholarship of the German theologian F. C. Baur. To be sure, such scholarship was controversial in the Anglican world at the time. See Parsons (1988), Paget (2017), and Ledger-Lomas (2016).

apparent liberal credentials, a brick from none other than Independence Hall in Philadelphia was sent to Rome especially to be placed in the new building's cornerstone.<sup>29</sup> That the church thus expressed the material as well as spiritual claims of liberty was therefore no exaggeration.

In later describing the church's consecration, which took place on 25 March 1876, Nevin drew his readers' attention to the chime of bells presented by Thomas Messenger, the largest of which was inscribed with the words *Verbum Dei non est alligatum* (the word of God is not bound [*II Timothy* 2:9]). Nevin took delight in noting how these bells rang out on the day of the Pope's jubilee (which was happening at the same time) 'a much needed utterance ... to the people of Rome ... the long-stifled voice of Rome's greatest martyr'. Finally, with the building standing, he was able to say:

No American, habituated from childhood to the thought of religious liberty as a right as free to man as God's air and water, can possibly understand what this church on the Via Nazionale, dedicated to the great Apostle to the Gentiles, means to a Roman mind. Severely pure and beautiful in its architecture, it has come to stand before the Roman (indeed the Italian) people as the material representation of all those principles of truth and freedom which flow from St Paul's teaching. And has come thus to be looked to as the very type and symbol of the struggle of Protestantism, in the best and widest sense of the word, against the Papacy (Nevin, 1878: 99).

### **The Church of England: H. W. Wasse and All Saints'**

Like the Americans, the English also moved to acquire a more convenient site within the walls of the old city, but only after considerable indecision and frustration. Unlike the Americans, however, they did not opt for a location in the *città alta*. Rather, as the English community in Rome was traditionally associated with the area in and around the Piazza di Spagna (the so-called *Ghetto degli Inglese*), the church authorities accepted a site nearby, at the corner of Via di Gesù e Maria and Via del Babuino, containing the ruins of an old convent. But the process of settling upon and obtaining this site proved far from straightforward. Although the instinct of the church authorities was to move within the walls following the events of September 1870,<sup>30</sup> the idea was quickly floated of purchasing the building in which the chapel was already located – on the Via Flaminia, just outside the Porta del Popolo – along with adjacent buildings (nos. 12, 13, and 14). This was thought a good idea as it was known that the new municipality was planning urban improvement schemes in the area and was looking to purchase land on a compulsory basis for road widening. After a number of alternative suggestions and false starts (including schemes for refurbishing the existing chapel), the lots beyond the

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<sup>29</sup> Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, Vestry Meeting Minutes (1873).

<sup>30</sup> For instance, only two days after the conquest of Rome, Joseph Severn, then British Consul in Rome, wrote to the SPG to express his keen desire to have the church relocated within the walls as soon as possible. See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, J. Severn to SPG, unpublished letter (22 Sept. 1870), C/EUR/21a.

Porta del Popolo were eventually purchased in March 1875.<sup>31</sup> Proposals had been tabled to rebuild on these lots, but with the municipality of Rome now requiring the land for their improvement schemes, the church authorities struck a deal in which they were able to swap their property outside the walls for a site of equivalent value within.<sup>32</sup>

These manoeuvrings over the acquisition of a new site were connected to concerns regarding the ability to raise funds, both for a new site and a new building – a problem that beleaguered the project from beginning to end. But these practicalities appear not to have prevented the church committee from imagining what might be aspired to architecturally. As with the Americans, G. E. Street was soon associated with plans for a new building. His name first appears in relation to the project in 1871, around the time a move within the walls was first mooted.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, a design for the church by Street was exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1872 (**Fig. 7**).<sup>34</sup> This initial design was in a similar Italian Gothic idiom to that of St Paul's, and intended for the Porta del Popolo site (Via Flaminia). However, owing to the complications surrounding funding and location, these plans were shelved. It was not until some five years later, in June 1877, that Street was formally invited once again to supply drawings.

Although the English church in Rome was often referred to as 'Protestant', the rhetoric surrounding ideas of Protestant identity and its relationship to architecture was more muted than in the case of St Paul's. But this is not to say that members of the congregation and committee were neither alive to nor unconcerned with such matters. The private correspondence between English residents, friends of the church, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), which became trustee of the church's property in 1875, bear out these concerns. Moreover, the historically factious nature of English Anglicanism ('low' versus 'high'), combined with the mixed liturgical preferences of both the resident and seasonal congregation at Rome (including its clergy), meant that tensions within the community were never far from view.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> An overview of the complications concerning the selection of a site can be found in Talbot Wilson (1916: 89-100). There is an extant copy of a contract for the purchase of the sites in and adjacent to which the English chapel was located from a one Cavaliere Eugenio Goggani, dated 18 June 1873, but Wasse's summary of committee meeting minutes (see note 58 below) shows that the site was not actually purchased until March 1875. See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, C/EUR/21a.

<sup>32</sup> This was ultimately the site upon which the current church sits, the negotiations for which took some two years to conclude between about 1879 and 1881. For instance, see: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, C/EUR/21a; Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, 'The English Church in Rome', Building Committee Minute Book, C/EUR/21b.

<sup>33</sup> See historical account of the church's design and construction in Wasse's handwriting: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, C/EUR/21a.

<sup>34</sup> This drawing was dated January 1872. See *The Builder* 11 May 1872: 359; *The Building News* 10 May 1872: 381; and illustrations sections of *The Building News* 24 May 1872: n. p.

<sup>35</sup> At times alarm was raised on the part of some among the congregation of what was perceived in the clergy as 'popish' practices. For example, see: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, W. B. d'Almeida to SPG(?), unpublished letters (13 February 1866), C/EUR/21a; Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, J. T. Payne to SPG, unpublished letter (28 May 1866), C/EUR/21a. The Bishop of Gibraltar was aware of the sensitivities around this matter, acknowledging the presence of a 'strong Evangelical party' in Rome, who 'will certainly have a rival church' if forced to have a 'High Church or Ritualistic' priest. See: Oxford,



Although a consensual approach towards worship was pursued, with the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer firmly invoked as the basis of liturgical authority, the rather febrile disposition of the community reached breaking point in the late 1860s, leading to division and the setting up of a rival (Evangelical) church, Holy Trinity, in 1870 (Talbot Wilson, 1916: 84-91).<sup>36</sup>

These concerns over the nature and veracity of Anglican worship in Rome inevitably extended to appearances. In 1864, for instance, the Rev. Francis Blake Woodward, then presiding chaplain, wrote to the SPG on the importance of the manner in which the English Church presented itself in Rome, observing how:

The Roman Committee are deeply impressed with the conviction that it is essential to the best interests of our Church on the Continent, that she should be exhibited to the foreigners which surround her, whether Romanists or Protestants, in her real character; that she should be *seen* to be what she *professes* to be; in short, that her system, as set forth in the Prayer-book, should, so far as circumstances in each case admit, be carried out in its integrity. In no place is it of more vital moment that this principle should be adhered to than at Rome.<sup>37</sup>

Some twenty years later, at the time the church was under construction, concerns of this nature were still current. In 1883, for example, Admiral Sir Erasmus Ommanney noted how the erection of a proper church in Rome was a matter of national distinction and pride. In a letter to the Rev. E. P. Sketchley of the SPG, he stressed how raising sufficient funds for such an enterprise would give added impetus to the 'urgency of establishing the Church of England in Rome on a more exalted position, ... placing our Church in a footing to take its status so as to command the dignity and respect of other great nations, and to be worthy of our own'.<sup>38</sup> The official fundraising literature echoed this concern. We find on a number of occasions phrases being employed such as 'national undertaking' or 'worthy of our country and our Church', as well as how important it was that in Rome the Church of England have a 'material building' of which it 'need not be ashamed'.<sup>39</sup> Even the spectacle of the American church was invoked as a means of reminding would-be donors in England not only of the possibilities that lay within their grasp but also the embarrassing consequences of their neglect.<sup>40</sup> Of all the places in the

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Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, Bp. of Gibraltar to T. W. Bullock (SPG), unpublished letter (20 May 1866), D29c, 2235.

<sup>36</sup> Rome was of course not the only English community affected by such schism. For that at Bordighera, and for the challenges of the Diocese of Gibraltar in general, see Pellegrino Sutcliffe (2013: 265-75).

<sup>37</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, F. B. Woodward to the Continental Chaplaincy Committee (SPG), unpublished letter (8 April 1864), C/EUR/21a.

<sup>38</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, E. Ommanney to E. P. Sketchley (SPG), unpublished letter (24 Nov. 1883), C/EUR/21a.

<sup>39</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, 'English Church in Rome', fundraising pamphlet (c.1880), C/EUR/21b; *The Mission Field* 1 June 1885: 193, and 1 Dec. 1887: 381. See also Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, Building Committee Minute Book (7 July 1882), C/EUR/21b.

<sup>40</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, 'The English Church in Rome' (n.d.), C/EUR/21b.

world, surely it was in Rome that the Church of England had to stand conspicuous and proud.<sup>41</sup>

But Ommanney went further. Once the Church of England had been firmly established through conspicuous and monumental form in Rome, he stressed, that city would become 'much the chief base for the expansion and establishment for our Church in S[outhern] Europe'.<sup>42</sup> Such a comment indicates that some among the supporters for a new church at Rome were wont to equate a 'worthy' building with authoritative presence; that such a structure would represent a serious intent to act on a wider front with respect to the spread of reformed Christianity. This idea relates All Saints' to St Paul's in the way it was supposed to symbolise – both as an institution and an instrument – the coming of a new order. As with the Americans, it also hinted at a certain freedom of conscience, as well as a particular freedom to proselytise. Indeed, with the chaplaincy at Rome having been under the patronage of the SPG since 1866, the church had more than a few missionary associations.<sup>43</sup>

The man who did most to see that a church addressing these anxieties was erected was the Rev. Henry Watson Wasse (1831-91). Little is known about Wasse, except that he was a rather controversial figure during his time at Rome (**Fig. 8**).<sup>44</sup> Having graduated BA from Magdalene College, Cambridge, in 1856, he was a clergyman of clear High Church persuasion – a leaning that was seen as particularly hazardous in Rome. But despite his Tractarian sympathies, Wasse was by all accounts unwavering in his allegiance to the reformed, anti-Catholic carriage of the Church of England. For instance, we can find him taking umbrage at times over what he believed were Vatican 'spies' among his congregation, and how such forces were encouraging 'perverts'.<sup>45</sup> He was also alarmed at what he thought was the increasing influence of the 'black clerical party' (Papists) on the new municipal authorities in Rome, fearing that, under such influence, obstacles would be put in the way of the new church project.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, as one of Wasse's obituarists later observed, he had done 'a great deal to spread a knowledge of

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<sup>41</sup> In the minds of some this was considered all the more important because, from January to April, the congregation of the English church in Rome was 'perhaps the most highly educated and important in the world'. See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, William Lea to SPG(?), unpublished letter (22 April 1869), C/EUR/21a.

<sup>42</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, E. Ommenney to E. P. Sketchley (SPG), unpublished letter (24 Nov. 1883), C/EUR/21a.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, quoting the SPG's journals of meetings from 1859-64, the Rev. H. P. Thompson observed that, along with taking control of church property and the appointment of chaplains, the Society, through its assistance in creating the bishopric of Gibraltar, had always wished to encourage 'diffusion of information regarding its principles' (Thompson, 1951: 469).

<sup>44</sup> Wasse was known to be rather obstinate, and he fell out with a number of prominent church committee members at All Saints', such as J. C. Hooker. These episodes are recorded in the correspondence for 1886 in Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, C/EUR/21a.

<sup>45</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, H. W. Wasse to H. W. Tucker (SPG), unpublished letter (27 August 1881), C/EUR/21a.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

reformed Christianity amongst the Italian populations'.<sup>47</sup> In other words, much like Nevin, Wasse's suspicion of and disdain for Roman Catholicism was clear enough.

Wasse came to Rome in 1872, at first to take up the assistant chaplaincy, before becoming chaplain proper in 1875.<sup>48</sup> What accompanied his high church leanings, which is also clear from his correspondence with the SPG, was a keen knowledge of and enthusiasm for church architecture. So determined was Wasse to see All Saints' completed within a reasonable timeframe, and to the highest of standards, he lent the trustees over £2500 of his own money. Although the saga behind the church's construction was protracted and legally fraught, with Wasse losing his temper on occasion, his resolve remained steadfast. He paid especial attention to the procurement and installation of the marble piers and columns that comprise the nave arcades of the church, which are one of the building's most delightful features (Bremner, 2018: 85).

Being alive to the subtleties and meanings of ecclesiastical architecture, especially as these had developed within the Church of England throughout the course of the mid-nineteenth century, Wasse understood the symbolic value of erecting 'a *Gothic* church worthy of its object, worthy of our country and our faith', in the heart of Rome.<sup>49</sup> This is one of the rare instances where an explicit connection is made between the Gothic Revival as a style of architecture and the ambitions of the Church of England in Rome. Street, too, understood the value and purpose of this connection. Remaining true to his instincts as a designer, as well as the principles of Victorian ecclesiology, he held fast to his Lombardic vision, in this case proposing a structure that drew its inspiration from brick-built towns such as Cremona, Mantua, and Pavia (**Fig. 9**). Street was struck by the exquisite mastery of brick detailing in many of the ancient churches he had seen in these locations during his visits, especially the honesty they displayed in terms of practical economy and straightforward (but no less decorative) construction (Street, 1874). Although G. G. Scott's and William Slater's past involvement with the English church in Rome would assume that a connection between Anglicanism and medieval architecture had long been sought, it was the imagination of Wasse, along with the input of Street, that brought this association to fruition. In the mind of Wasse, at least, the desire to make such a connection seems to have been basic if not obvious, especially in the context of the religious politics of post-conquest Rome.

### **Financing the New Liberal Order: Private Beneficence and Public Virtue**

The way these two churches were funded is also an important part of their story. Being private initiatives, they were financed almost entirely by private means. In the case of St Paul's, the rollcall of donors includes illustrious names such as Wolfe, Field,

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<sup>47</sup> Obituary. *The Guardian* 8 April 1891: 8.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. See also Bishop of Gibraltar's pastoral letter of 1891: 12.

<sup>49</sup> My italics. See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, 'The English Church in Rome', Building Committee Minute Book, C/EUR/21b.

Schermerhorn, Morgan, Herriman, and Roosevelt – all well-known financiers, businessmen, art dealers, and property developers, both in New York City and in Rome (Nevin, 1878: 264-80; Lowrie, 1926: 55-6). Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (1828-87) was the most generous of these, gifting some \$56,000 to the erection of St Paul's. A number of these donors, in particular the Wolfes, Schermerhorns, and Morgans, were noted patrons of the Episcopal Church and its causes in the United States (Duyckinck, 1872: 5-6).<sup>50</sup> John David Wolfe, Catharine's father, not only donated liberally toward the erection of St Paul's but had also served as a vestry member of Grace Church in Rome, as had William H. Herriman, Hickson W. Field, and F. Augustus Schermerhorn, with Herriman having become Senior Warden and Treasurer by 1871.<sup>51</sup> After a trust had been set up in New York to hold and administer the property deeds for St Paul's, John Pierpont Morgan was elected a trustee, becoming Treasurer of the Board of Trustees and donating \$1,000 to the cause.<sup>52</sup>

In the case of All Saints', subscription lists from the period show that the bulk of funds raised came from large amounts of small donations, ranging mostly between £1 and £50, from some 2,000 individual subscribers, with a little over thirty of these pledging £100 or more.<sup>53</sup> Among the biggest donors were the daughters of the Bishop of Gloucester, appearing as 'the Misses Monk' on the subscription lists, who gave £500, and the Gibbs family (of guano trade fame), who donated approximately £3,000.<sup>54</sup> But the single most generous donor was the Hon. Henry Walpole (1818-76), son of Horatio, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Orford, and his family, who appear to have gifted in the order of £4,500 (approx. \$22,000US) over a ten year period.<sup>55</sup> Walpole, who spent considerable amounts of time in Rome, had been Treasurer of the initial church building fund until his death in 1876. Owing to a rift and subsequent reconciliation among the English community in Rome concerning the style of worship at All Saints', the patronage of the chaplaincy was given over to the SPG in 1866. As mentioned, this was followed in 1875 by transference of the church and its property to the same organisation, allowing it to act as principal trustee

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<sup>50</sup> Obituary (John David Wolfe), *New York Times* 20 May 1872. Wolfe had been a vestry member of Trinity Church and a Senior Warden of Grace Church, New York. J. P. Morgan was a life-long devotee of the Episcopal Church in the United States, and was for a time Senior Warden of St George's Church, New York. See Strouse (1999: 74-5, 273-6). For the Schermerhorn's connection with the Episcopal Church, see Cutter (1915, II: 612-14).

<sup>51</sup> For the Fields' connection to and influence in Rome, see Häuber (2015).

<sup>52</sup> Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, Vestry Meeting Minutes (9 November 1872). For the donation, see Nevin (1878: 276). J. P. Morgan's father, Junius Spencer, also gave a considerable amount of money to the building fund. See commemorative plaque on baptistery pier in St Paul's, Rome.

<sup>53</sup> Subscription list for the English Church in Rome (1881-85), Vestry Archive, All Saints' Church, Rome.

<sup>54</sup> The Gibbs estimate includes an anonymous donation of £2,000 made in 1880. This donation appears in the published subscription lists, but inspection in the church archive identifies the donor as one Antony Gibbs. This is most likely the son of William Gibbs (1790-1875), the great English guano merchant of Gibbs, Bright & Co. See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, A. Gibbs to Rev. Canon [Robert] Gregory (SPG), unpublished letter (14 Feb. 1880), C/EUR/21a.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. This estimate is based on the final extant subscription list published in 1885, along with other miscellaneous lists, for slightly earlier, included Walpole, his wife, and immediate relatives. There is also a note in the minutes of vestry meetings at St Paul's that an exchange rate of £1 to \$5, and \$1 to 5 lire, was being used to convert the value of donations.

in matters legal and financial (Wasse, 1885: 6-7). From then on the SPG offered ongoing support to the church, and helped promote its causes.

Indeed, external support and proprietary influence in both cases helps shed further light on what might be viewed as the ulterior motives of these buildings and their proxy agents. For instance, in the case of St Paul's, the strong support from the Episcopalian community in New York City, especially the congregation of Grace Church, not only ensured the enterprise's success but also augmented its political and wider cultural-missionary purpose. The idea had always been to influence both Roman and wider Italian society by not only marking the presence of an alternative and more rational version of Christianity, but also by encouraging the liberal, modernising ambitions of the new Italian state.<sup>56</sup> The conflict over Italian unification had itself been played out in the local and national press in the United States, especially in New York City, which had a sizable Roman Catholic population (Marraro, 1956: 41-62). The assistance offered to the American Protestant community in Rome by prominent New York Episcopalians must therefore be seen in the context of this war of words (and clash of ideologies) – the tensions over which Nevin was able to exploit while on his fundraising trips there in the 1870s. Added to this were the explicit efforts on the part of Protestants in Rome to affect church reform in situ, thus attempting to influence change from within Catholic society itself (Conybeare, 1883).<sup>57</sup> This objective corresponds with Danilo Raponi's demonstration of how Protestant bible societies and their affiliated agents, in particular, were very active in Italy in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, hoping to infiltrate Italian society and inculcate the teachings and values of Protestantism while the new Italian state was in the midst of formation. This 'mission' was understood as a political and cultural endeavour as much as it was a religious one (Raponi, 2014; Villani, 2017; Raponi, 2013). Again, given that both the chaplaincy and church property at All Saints' had come under the patronage of the SPG by 1875, it too can be seen as having had an implicit if somewhat taciturn proselytising agenda, both religious and cultural.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, these churches were understood, in part at least, as more than just houses of worship. They were beacons of a particular vision of society: one that was based on rational liberal values, material prosperity, and political representation.<sup>59</sup> After all, it is precisely along these lines that the 'Anglosphere' West hoped that the new Italy would

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<sup>56</sup> Again, see: Rome, St. Paul's Vestry Archive, circular letter 'To the Friends of the American Chapel, Rome' (1871).

<sup>57</sup> Here Nevin is highlighted as one of the prime movers and supporters of the cause for Roman Catholic reform. Nevin was also a secretary of the Anglo-Continental Society, a pan-Anglican organisation (est. 1853), the objectives of which was to 'help forward the Internal Reformation of National Churches and other religious communities, by spreading information within them'. See *What is the Anglo-Continental Society* (London: Rivingtons, 1874). For this society's ambitions in Italy, see Villani (2018). Again, it was noted in Wasse's obituary that he 'did a great deal to spread a knowledge of reformed Christianity amongst the Italian populations, without fanaticism or sectarian bias'. See *The Guardian* 8 April 1891: 8.

<sup>58</sup> This may be understood in the context of Anglican missionary ambitions in the Mediterranean region as a whole. See Dixon (2018).

<sup>59</sup> Wasse also observed that a number of the principal donors to St Paul's were not members of that church, but had acted out of 'patriotism'. See Wasse (1885: 12).

be formed as it emerged from the unification process, becoming one of the great powers of Europe. This is no doubt why Britain was the first established power to recognise officially the new Italian state. Victorian Britain's overbearing confidence in the superiority of its own values and form of government meant that it not only had high hopes for Italy but that Italy would do well to follow Britain's esteemed and time-honoured example (McIntire, 1983: 3-7, 37-8). Moreover, with the potential for political instability (if not crisis) that an endeavour such as Italian unification represented to the balance of power in Europe, Britain, as the world's great superpower, understood the outcome of a stable and liberal Italy as important to its wider foreign policy objectives in the Mediterranean, where it maintained a substantial naval presence (McIntire, 1983: 7-8, 57-65). Although continually frustrated, and rarely living up to expectations (indeed, continually disappointing), it was expected that the new Italy would develop full constitutional government in time, leading to the kind of social stability and economic prosperity enjoyed in places like Britain and the United States.<sup>60</sup> In this respect, political influence, economic development, and religious values were thoroughly intertwined in Britain's and America's quest to accelerate the forces of liberalisation in modern Italy (Raponi, 2009).

Given these auxiliary factors, it is worth pondering for a moment the financial contribution made to St Paul's by the Morgan banking family (Junius Spencer and John Pierpont), to take but one example. Being devout Episcopalians, the largess of the Morgans was in one respect proffered out of religious conviction; but, as leading players in the international banking scene, it may be argued that it was also linked, however indirectly, to their growing business interests in Europe as stakeholders in transatlantic banking syndicates formed for the purpose of issuing substantial government loans. With J. S. Morgan & Co. later involved (£120,000) in the issuing of a £14.6 million loan to the new Italian government (1881), the Morgans were in a sense bargaining on the successful liberalisation of the Italian economy, paving the way for profitable business opportunities in the future (Carosso, 1987: 205).<sup>61</sup> Again, as the building campaign for St Paul's was partly sold to donors on the basis of it being a herald of progress, it is likely that Morgan interpreted his assistance in multiple and complementary ways.

Therefore, with these factors in mind, it may be suggested that the presence of the two Anglican churches in Rome was understood – beyond their basic function as houses of worship – as encouragement in the direction of religious and cultural liberalisation, and is something that most donors not only hoped for but surely anticipated.

### ***Città Nuove: Locating Street's Churches in the New Rome(s)***

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<sup>60</sup> For instance, on the British view of Italy, see Wright (2015). See also letter from Odo Russell to Lord John Russell (16 January 1861), reprinted in Mack Smith (1968: 396-401).

<sup>61</sup> It is worth noting that J. S. Morgan & Co. refused a loan to the new Italian government in 1871 on the grounds that it was, at the time, too risky.

Another important factor in understanding the significance of the two Anglican churches by G. E. Street in Rome is the place they occupied within the wider and changing urban environment. The selection of site in both cases was obviously important, if not crucial, but there was also the issue of how these buildings – as monumental additions to the urban landscape of Rome – were part of a broader geography of protest and modernisation that affected the morphology of the post-1870 city. This is significant because, like the churches themselves, the carefully-considered and deliberately-orchestrated planning interventions of the new liberal administration in Rome were designed as a form of mockery against the *ancien régime* of the Papacy, especially given the resistance of that regime to the unification of the Italian peninsula.

In the case of siting, the Americans had always been keen to secure not just a commodious site for their new church but also an influential one (Nevin, 1878: 54-5). Rather than looking to the past and the old city, they looked instead to the future and the ‘new city’ (the area that would become known as the *città alta*) that was then rising to the east, on the Esquiline plateau, around the new Stazione Termini. In the uncertainty surrounding planning regulations that accompanied the months immediately following the conquest of Rome, property speculation was rife, and the Americans jumped at the opportunity to acquire a site in the new urban development. It was here that the city planning commission, as far as it then existed, was able to get the wide, evenly-graded, and tree-lined ‘Via Nuova’ inserted, effectively linking the Piazza Venezia to the Stazione. As Terry Kirk has observed, this avenue, which would become the Via Nazionale, with its regular and consistent urbanism, was the first boulevard of the new capital of the new Italy, giving Rome the pretence to rank itself alongside the modernising achievements of other great European capitals (Kirk, 2005: 227). For Nevin, the site was considered advantageous for its prime street frontage, as well as its ‘superior healthfulness and freedom from the danger of inundation’. Moreover, the Via Nazionale was not only the ‘handsomest street of Rome’, he contended, but the location of the city’s two principal hotels, and thus the ‘favorite residence of the foreign population’ (Nevin, 1878: 54).

The siting of All Saints’ was likewise caught up in the uncertainty surrounding urban planning policy in the new capital. However, as mentioned, it was primarily lack of funding that initially prevented its move within the walls. Although the church’s ultimate location, on Via del Babuino, was within the vicinity of the traditional English haunt of the Piazza di Spagna, the acquisition of this site had more to do with chance than foresight, and was not necessarily the church committee’s first choice. A contemporary map held among the church’s archive material, heavily marked showing the location of prominent hotels, suggests that careful thought had gone into where best to locate the new church. A solid blue dot in the middle of this map, roughly at the corner of Via della Panetteria and Via in Arcione, amongst these hotels, is prominently

labelled 'proposed site'.<sup>62</sup> Around this dot are identified other important places, such as the British Consul's house, the Ambassador's house, the Ambassador's office, and a zone marked 'English Residents'. Indeed, by the late nineteenth century the English community in Rome had begun moving away from the area in and around Piazza di Spagna, prompting some to bemoan the Via del Babuino site. Others, such as the British Consul, had initially suggested the possibility of taking and refitting an abandoned church in the Piazza Navona.<sup>63</sup> These calculations, some more fanciful than others, highlight the desire on the part of the English to get a site that, like the Americans, was not only convenient, but also prominent and thus potentially influential.

This jostling over prime real estate was a logical response to the pulling down of the Papal state edifice, and the consequent opening up of the city of Rome to rapid and unprecedented development. The euphoria of opportunity that accompanied this moment was by all accounts intense. After all, the new municipality itself (despite Wasse's suspicions of it) was working deliberately to remake the city, dismantling signs of Papal authority in its wake. The decades following the conquest of Rome witnessed the erection of several nationalistic and politically inspired monuments that sought to stamp the identity and liberal credentials of the new Italy on the capital. The most conspicuous of these was the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II (1885-1911), which, through its encasement in the whitest Brescian limestone and programme of public sculpture, symbolised (both physically and emblematically) everything that the old Rome repudiated. A similar monument, both in terms of scale and symbolism, was the Palazzo di Giustizia, or Supreme Court (1889-1911). A huge, visually striking building, it was located deliberately in the Prati district of the city, on ground that was actively being considered as part of a land concession to the Vatican. Thus, being a most conspicuous mechanism of modern statehood, rising as it did in a bold, near aggressive manner on the western banks of the Tiber, this structure declared in no equivocal way the resolve of the new state to assert its temporal powers, including a programme of decorative sculpture that expressly redefined the diminished role of the Church in the nation's new political configuration (Kirk, 2011: 119-21).

Memorial statues to the good and the great of the unification cause also rose throughout the city during this period. Perhaps the two most impressive were those commemorating the champions of that cause (military and political), Garibaldi and Cavour. The equestrian monument to Garibaldi, atop the Janiculum Hill, depicts the great military campaigner taking a sideways glance, fixing his gaze firmly on the Vatican, with the great dome of St Peter's looming defiantly in the distance (**Fig. 10**). This posture, as if frozen in a gesture of contempt, deliberately provokes a tension between the once all-powerful symbols of religious order in the city and the now triumphant liberal state, suggesting eternal vigilance as the price of freedom (Kirk,

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<sup>62</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, C/EUR/21b. This map most likely dates from the period 1873-4, when discussions over proposed sites were at their most intense.

<sup>63</sup> See: Oxford, Bodleian Library, USPG Archive, J. Severn to SPG, unpublished letter (22 Sept. 1870), C/EUR/21a.



2005: 239). The statue of Cavour, on the other hand, a somewhat less dramatic offering by the then conservative city council, is located off the right bank of the Tiber, close to the Vatican and adjacent the Palazzo di Giustizia (Piazza Cavour), seemingly invoking the great statesman's modern ecclesiastical policy of freedom of religion, now enshrined in law. Other such monuments included that to the sixteenth-century monk and philosopher Giordano Bruno, located in the Campo dei Fiori, the site of Bruno's execution at the hands of the Inquisition in 1600. Erected by Freemasons, it was a defiant symbol of freedom of thought (Kirk, 2005: 239; Kertzer, 2000: 203).<sup>64</sup>

Given these interventions in the wider urban environment, one can see how Street's two Anglican churches, although perceived by some as architectural anomalies, were far from alone in the context of what Kirk has called the evolving 'political topography' of late nineteenth-century Rome. Indeed, as already noted, these two churches were staking their own claims to prominence in this rapidly changing and politically-charged landscape. This is especially the case when the new government's concern for articulating the reformed status of church-state relations is taken into account. Such an understanding forces us to reconsider the nature, purpose, and meaning of these churches as works that were specifically concerned with servicing the needs of particular communities. They were also part of a larger constellation of buildings and monuments that signalled a concerted resistance to the old order.

## **Conclusion: History and Architecture**

It may be concluded from this analysis of G. E. Street's two Roman churches that whatever apparently anomalous presence they have acquired in the eyes of onlookers over the intervening years, this was entirely deliberate, and cannot be ascribed to insensitivity nor incompetence on the part of either the architect or his clients. On the contrary: there is strong evidence to suggest that the aloofness of the two buildings was actively orchestrated as a way of drawing attention to the fundamental differences between Anglicanism as an apparently 'true' faith and the 'error' of Roman Catholicism, and how both buildings – as centres of spiritual activity – might be understood by observers as affecting wider change with respect to the social and religious constitution of the new Italy. Thus, the Gothic architecture of G. E. Street in Rome, when considered in relation to the complex motivations of his clients, including the way the forms were understood in the context of the city's existing urban fabric, was very much an architecture of protest (a *Protest-ant* architecture). Intriguingly, Street achieved his stunning *coup de théâtre* not by imposing a foreign, 'English' style of architecture on Rome, as might have been expected, but by employing a recognisably Italian idiom instead, as if to tutor Italians in the virtues and vices of their own architectural heritage.

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<sup>64</sup> This statue was also raised in the context of the Pope issuing encyclicals concerning the error and un-Christian basis of Freemasonry. For these monuments, see also Kirk (2011: 107-15).

Indeed, given these factors, might Street's two churches be better understood as Trojan horses of a sort? Although the Bishop of Derry claimed that St Paul's would be raised in 'no bitter, offensive, sectarian, contentious spirit' – that is to say, more as a friendly rather than hostile gesture – Nevin clearly felt otherwise, seeing the building as the 'the first stroke in manifestation' of the transposed state of affairs that had emerged in post-conquest Rome. We also know that Nevin was quite resentful of the way his faith and its community had been treated by the Vatican prior to 1870. Wasse, too, was deeply alarmed by what he saw as the mischievous residue of papal authority that continued to penetrate every aspect of Roman life and politics – what he perceived as the underhand tactics of the 'black clerical party'. Moreover, having come into the possession of the SPG, All Saints' was interpreted by some, at least, as an important base for the diffusion of Anglican and wider Protestant values and ideals. Therefore, although both Anglican communities continued to act (outwardly, at least) in an amiable and open fashion under the mantra of '*libera chiesa in libero stato*', internally there were multiple agendas behind how these two buildings, as symbols of something greater than themselves, could be marshalled in encouraging if not enforcing Catholic reform.

What may also be concluded here is the important role that architecture played as a perceived form of agency in these religious and political machinations. This points to the significance of engaging an analysis of built form as a means of interpreting the history and purpose of the two churches. If Victorians had the idea that buildings were somehow sermons in stone, then Street's two Roman churches were seen to speak directly to the moral and spiritual concerns maintained by high Anglicans in the Victorian age. In this case, the churches not only sought to be faithful to Anglicanism's claims to purity and truth, but also – through their design and process of assemblage – aimed at projecting an outward-facing message and method of instruction, thus accruing distinctive didactic and missionary dimensions. This remains one of the more intriguing aspects of how, in a material culture sense, the two buildings emerge as physical and monumental indices to the cultural politics that characterised the urban landscapes of post-conquest Rome. It is clear that both Nevin and Wasse, along with numerous other members of their congregations, understood the power of architecture and were keen to exploit it, leaving in their wake a built legacy that must be acknowledged if not admired.

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